

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## Vice President Biden Pledges Continued U.S. Disaster Recovery Support for Japan

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — Vice President Biden met with Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan and survivors of Japan's earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in some of the most severely affected cities as part of an official visit meant to reassure the Japanese people that the United States "will stand by Japan for as long as it takes" to recover.

"On March 11, when the earth shook and the ocean surged, the thoughts and prayers of the entire world turned toward Japan, a great and peaceful nation," Biden said in remarks at Sendai Airport August 23.

The airport, which was severely damaged by floods, serves as a symbol of U.S.-Japanese military cooperation in the wake of the disaster. Biden said that within one week, Japanese forces and their U.S. counterparts successfully reopened the airport's runway, enabling the arrival of hundreds of relief workers and more than 2 million tons of humanitarian supplies.

The vice president told survivors he was proud the U.S. military was "given the privilege of being able to join your forces." The United States launched Operation Tomodachi ("Friendship") — the single largest humanitarian relief effort in American history — within hours of the earthquake.

In addition to the military response, Biden said, the United States has provided ongoing assistance to Japan's economic recovery.

"It's important for the United States that Japan remain open for business and continue to grow, to prosper," Biden said. "There is no limit, in our view, what two of the world's largest economies, and strongest and most dynamic economies in the history of the world, can accomplish together."

He said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Japan in April to launch a partnership aimed at revitalizing the country's economy by building stronger links between Asia and the global economy.

"This is taking shape as a public-private friendship initiative, in essence the sequel to Operation Friendship, to support Japan's recovery ... through fellowship and grant programs that support education and innovative business projects," Biden said. He called it "an investment in tomorrow's leaders."

The vice president said leaders in both countries are

working to enhance cooperation between Japanese and U.S. businesses, civil society groups and public officials.

"America's commitment to our friend and ally Japan extends well beyond support in times of need, and reflects the profound importance America places on our relationship with Japan and our deep ties to this region," Biden said.

Biden commended the country for its "remarkable progress" since the disaster, noting that schools have reopened, businesses are recuperating and homes are being rebuilt. He said that even as it recovers, Japan continues to play a "prominent and positive role in world affairs."

He praised the country for its long history of offering assistance to people in need around the world.

"Whatever and wherever on the planet disaster strikes, Japan has always been among the first to lend a hand and deploy aid workers, generous contributions and essential donations," Biden said, highlighting Japanese assistance following recent disasters such as the Indian Ocean tsunami, the earthquake in Haiti and floods in Pakistan.

He said the United States remains committed to working with the Japanese people, and that his visit is meant to "reinforce and reassert that commitment of an ally to an ally, a friend to a friend."

Earlier August 23, Biden met in Tokyo with Kan, who thanked him for continued U.S. assistance. The vice president later spent time in towns and cities most affected by the disasters, and visited a community center near the Sendai Airport that served as a refugee center for hundreds of people who lost their homes.

Biden's visit to Japan is the final stop on his nine-day, three-nation tour of Asia. He traveled to Beijing and Chengdu in China August 17-22, and visited Mongolia's capital city, Ulaanbaatar, August 22. He is set to leave for Washington August 24.

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**Adoption of U.N. Human Rights Council's Resolution on Syria**

U.S. Mission Geneva  
Office of Public Affairs

Press Statement by  
Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe  
U.S. Representative to the Human Rights Council

Following passage of HRC resolution on the Human Rights Situation in Syria

Geneva,  
August 23, 2011

"The passage today of the Human Rights Council resolution on the Human Rights Situation in Syria sends several important messages:

First, there is a very strong and growing consensus in the international community that Assad has lost legitimacy to govern and must step down. The outcome manifests the extent to which he is now isolated.

Second, through this resolution, the international community sent a clear message to the Syrian people: We will not stand by silently as innocent civilians and peaceful protesters are slaughtered by security forces. We are working to ramp up pressure on the Syrian authorities to help ensure that the violence ends.

We have not been fooled by empty promises of reform and engagement. Actions speak louder than words: the continuing atrocities have sent a loud and clear message to us all that Assad's promises cannot be trusted.

The Commission of Inquiry established by the resolution will ensure that evidence of atrocities will be uncovered and those responsible will be identified and held accountable.

Today's outcome is a victory for the Syrian people."

**Lone Rover Is on Verge of More Discoveries About Mars**

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — The Opportunity, an unmanned NASA rover on Mars, is taking its seven-year exploration of the planet's surface to new terrain, as scientists on Earth at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in California eagerly examine the photos and data the craft transmits back home.

Opportunity's primary mission at this stage of exploration is to examine the large crater Endeavour,

which is 21 kilometers in diameter. Upon reaching Endeavour earlier in August, Opportunity encountered a small crater rimmed by material ejected from its center. What Opportunity has revealed about the nature of that material allows scientists to suggest that this crater is a relatively young one on the pockmarked face of the Red Planet.

The findings are likely to prove valuable in continually expanding scientific knowledge about Mars, but merely reaching the edge of this crater is an achievement in itself.

"Our arrival at this destination is a reminder that these rovers have continued far beyond the original three-month mission," said John Callas, Mars Exploration Rover project manager.

Those original three months ended in 2004, and the plucky vehicle has been serving what NASA calls "bonus overtime" ever since. The mission for Opportunity and its sister craft Spirit began with launch in 2003. The two craft were designed for a 90-day mission to study the history of environmental conditions at sites selected by scientists because of trace evidence of the presence of water at some point in the past. Both craft found geologic indicators of a watery past on the two very different sites where they landed.

After those first three months, scientists designed extended missions to send the intrepid vehicles to other locations on the Martian surface, continuing the search for evidence of water. Spirit continued to send back useful data up until 2010, when communications were lost. So far Opportunity has driven 1,500 kilometers, far past its originally planned 30 kilometers.

With Opportunity exploring a new region of Mars's surface, the rover is expected to send scientists some data on a type of rock they haven't seen before.

"Clay minerals form in wet conditions," said Matthew Golombek at JPL, "so we may learn about a potentially habitable environment that appears to have been very different from those responsible for the rocks comprising the plains."

Neither of the vehicles has detected signs of life itself, or a fossil record of life, nor were they equipped to do so. The record of a wet environment is still an important advance, establishing a greater possibility that microbial life might have survived there at one time.

Project manager Callas said in a blog post that the JPL team's skill in construction and operation of the rovers has given Opportunity its unexpected longevity and performance.

"It was the careful and attentive stewardship by the rover operators that protected the rover from dangerous conditions, reconfigured the rover during environmental extremes (e.g., winter) and carefully managed the utilization of finite resources (e.g., driving)," Callas wrote in his blog.

The life of the rover was also extended by wind gusts on Mars. While the accumulation of dust on the solar panels was expected to be a serious life-limiting factor for the craft, Callas says, periodic winds have continued to sweep Opportunity clean, allowing the craft's power source to survive much longer than expected.

But at a time when the U.S. economy is weak and the government's budget is overdrawn and due for deep reductions, NASA and scientists involved in similar research always need to be ready to justify the value of their work. Callas says the history of Mars as a planetary system may help us better understand what is in store for our own planet.

"The Earth is experiencing climate change and global warming," Callas writes in his blog. "Knowing how planets change and what phenomena drive that change is essential for us to make informed decisions about our own planet."

The Mars rovers have an international team backing them. Scientific instruments aboard the craft were supplied by the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry, also in Germany, and the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen, Denmark.

### Visiting Japanese Players Take Charge of Their Game

By Howard Cincotta | Special Correspondent

Washington — Everyone who encountered the young Japanese baseball and softball players during their 15-day U.S. visit remarked on their politeness and cooperation. But one group found themselves urging the 16 students to be a little less polite and respectful: American baseball umpires.

Under a brilliant blue sky on a bright green baseball field outside Baltimore, several youth-league umpires demonstrated the mechanics of how to call balls and strikes. Then they lined up the players and had them take turns calling the pitches themselves.

Be loud and clear, they urged the players, and always use a strong arm gesture to call a strike. Never be tentative or unsure. "Remember, you're in charge of the game," said veteran umpire David Ross with a smile. "Whatever your call, that's what it is!"

Softball umpire Rob Wells noted that umpires have to be quick as well as decisive. A typical softball pitch may be slower than a baseball throw, but since the pitcher's mound is much closer, he said, "the batter can have less reaction time for a softball pitch than a hardball pitch."

### AVOIDING INJURIES, HONING SKILLS

The umpiring session was one of many different workouts, training classes and practice games that the Japanese delegation participated in during their two-week visit to the United States — a sports exchange arranged by the U.S. State Department. All of the students — eight baseball-playing boys, eight softball-playing girls — are from the region of Japan affected by the earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in March.

In addition to working with umpires, they learned how to protect their throwing arms. At a sports medicine facility in Baltimore, director Josh Billings described the most common throwing injuries young baseball players can suffer and showed students how to prevent them. Both American and Japanese youth are beginning to play ball at younger ages and thus tend to be playing more intensely for more years, according to Billings. As a result, he said, "injuries common to professionals are now showing up in younger high school players."

"It's important to become stronger in the right muscles," Billings told the group. "The right exercises will help you avoid injury and raise the level of your game from other players."

The youth visited batting cages, had their swings videotaped and analyzed, did teambuilding exercises and learned about sports psychology. They were instructed by major league players, played against U.S. high school teams and watched games played at every level — from the Little League to the major leagues. They even took in a basketball game between two Women's National Basketball Association teams, the Washington Mystics and the Atlanta Dream.

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